Jury Convicts Company In Worker’s Death

On his first day working for Trigon Inc., Andrew Ross, 29, never made it home. Ross fell to his death from a 300 – foot communication tower. The Iowa Occupational Safety and Health bureau said he hadn’t had proper training and was not wearing fall protection equipment.

A Benton County jury convicted the company and its president of violating state safety rules in Ross’ death. It was the first criminal case in Iowa in which a company was prosecuted for willful violation of OSHA laws causing death.

Trigon and its president, Karl Thompson, were each found guilty of two counts of willful violation of safety regulations. The Supreme Court of Iowa heard testimony that Thompson had told an Iowa occupational health and safety investigator that it was his practice to train workers “after we see if they can hack it. ”

The military doesn’t hand people rifles and send them into the field “to see if they can hack it.” Recruits take basic training, and so should all workers. If you’re told to do something you’re not trained for, or aren’t sure you can do safely, then don’t do it. Ask your supervisor for training. If the company can’t or won’t provide it, remember that you have the right to refuse dangerous work. And if it comes down to it, it’s easier to find another job than another you.

Source: The Hawk Eye, Burlington Iowa, March 21, 2004